THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. February 19, 1937 Adar 8, 5697 No. 1.

EDITORIALS

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THE ETHICS OF THE SIT-DOWN STRIKE

A CHALLENGE TO THE "GOOD-WILL" MOVEMENT

THE SITUATION OF THE JEWS IN POLAND

By JACOB LESTCHINSKY

Translated from the Yiddish
By Samuel Dinin

JEWISH FAILURE OF NERVE

By IRVING LEVITAS

REALITIES OF JEWISH LIFE

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EDITORIALS

The Young People's League Comes of Age

DURING the Washington Birthday week-end, the Young People's League of the United Synagogue will hold its thirteenth annual (Bar-Mizvah Jubilee) convention at Washington, D. C. In Jewish tradition, *bar-mizvah* signifies "the coming of age," the official beginning of self-direction for the youth, coupled with a heightened awareness of moral responsibility. If the Young People's League takes seriously its own age, it must make its forthcoming convention the occasion not merely for another sociable get-together, but the occasion for giving direction and significance to its activities.

Direction and significance to life cannot be acquired merely by wishing for them; there is no royal road to meaningful activities. They are acquired only after study, thought, discussion, after a thorough probing of the soul. Have the members of the Young People's League undergone the discipline of study? Have they given long and patient thought to the problems of Jewish life? Have they engaged in serious and searching discussion? We do not know; but from all appearances, they have not yet arrived at the point where their attitudes and philosophies have crystallized into a program for American-Jewish life. They still repeat the shibboleths of their fathers which remain, for the most part, meaningless for them.

The lack of direction which they experience has come about through their inability, as yet, to understand clearly the changes that have taken place in the world and in Jewish life since the days of their parents. The first important task, therefore, which they must undertake is to learn what the problem of Jewish life actually is. They must then canvass the various versions of Judaism which contemporary Jewish life has to offer; they must examine the basic structure of Orthodoxy, Reformism and Conservatism. They must in all honesty analyze the doctrines of each from the point of view of the respective proponents of these philosophies of Judaism.

When they have completed their study, we believe, they will be in a position to formulate their own views with intelligence. Toward that end, we of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST suggest to the Young People's League that they enter upon a period of systematic study, utilizing the little volume entitled *Creative Judaism,* a volume written expressly for young people and based upon the larger volume, *Judaism As a Civilization.* In it they will

find a comprehensive analysis of the basic problems of Jewish life, as well as a clearly presented formulation of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST philosophy and program.

From our experience with young people we have come to learn that the approach of RECONSTRUCTIONISM to the issues of present day Jewish life appeals to the modern young man and woman who, in all sincerity, cannot subscribe to the basic assumptions of Orthodoxy, who find Reformism sterile and uninspiring, and who cannot get from Conservatism that clarity of thought without which they grope blindly. The most recent evidence of the power of RECONSTRUCTIONISM's appeal is an article published in the current *Shofer,* the official organ of Aleph Zadik Aleph of the B'nai B'rith. A young man named Yudell Luke has written an article entitled "The New Jew: A Plea for Dynamic Judaism" in which he indicates his reasons for finding both Orthodoxy and Reformism inadequate, and adopting the philosophy of Judaism as a civilization.

We are confident that if the members of the Young People's League give to the question of their organization's future the conscientious attention that it deserves, they will undoubtedly embody RECONSTRUCTIONISM into their program and join the swelling ranks of those who see in it the hope of a revitalized American Jewish life.

The Ethics of the Sit-Down Strike

THE employment of the strategy of the sit-down strike in the conflict between the C.I.O. unions and General Motors has given rise to much discussion concerning the ethical implications of this new weapon of class struggle. We are not concerned especially with the justification of its use in this particular instance. Other issues than the legitimacy of the weapon itself are here involved, issues that would call for an investigation of facts which we are not in a position to make. But the question whether the sit-down strike is inherently in violation of property rights is one that interests us profoundly.

There is, of course, no doubt that, from the point of view of the traditional concept of property, whether Jewish or Christian, the sit-down strike is a flagrant infringement on the rights of the owners of the plant. Traditional law, and the concept of property it expresses, vest in the owner of a factory, whether that owner be a corporation or an individual, the same right to its possession that the owner of a private home enjoys with reference to it. He may admit to it or exclude from it whomever he pleases. But, from the standpoint of the newer ethical standards which are emerging in our day, the question is not so simple.

Traditional ethics was based on an order of society in which it was all but impossible for the few to gain control of the instruments of production. In the early days of the capitalist economy, conditions began to change; and now that the machine age is full upon us, monopoly of the instruments of production can be achieved. In some instances, such monopoly has already been achieved. In view of these changes, the traditional idea of property remains no longer ethical, for now a handful of individuals are enabled to thwart the fulfillment of the needs of large masses if, for any reason, they decide that they prefer not to permit the machines which they control to function.

A new ethics of property is therefore required for our day. From the point of view of that new ethics, the right to property cannot be based on possession, but must be based on human need. A man's clothes are his property because they are proper to him, an extension of his person, serving the same function in his life that the fur serves in the life of the furry animals. His home is hardly less necessary to him than a snail's shell is to the snail, even though his home is not attached to his body. He therefore has a proprietary interest in it, based on human need. Similarly, in order to live,

men must eat; in order to eat men must work; and, in order to work, men must, in modern society, have access to the machines which are the indispensable tools of their work. Are we, then, justified in regarding the right to withhold from the worker the tools indispensable to his work as rightfully the exclusive privilege of an individual or corporation that happens to have had the means to purchase these tools, particularly since their acquisition was made possible, not exclusively by the individual acts of the owner or owners, but by the cooperation of vast numbers of workers in the production of the plant?

Look at the question from another angle. In the orthodox laissez-faire economics, labor was regarded as a commodity for sale in a competitive market. That conception has long been discarded. Even capitalistic economists recognize the need of legislation to protect the laborer from the exploitation which resulted from this theory. But if labor is not a commodity, being different from other commodities in that it is inseparable from the laborer himself, what is labor, economically considered? A newer conception answers: Labor is an investment. We doubt whether even this answer is adequate to express the intimate relation of the laborer to his work. But at any rate, it recognizes that he has a proprietary interest in his job, quite as much as the capitalist has a proprietary interest in his capital.

From the angle of these revised concepts of property rights and labor rights, the sit-down strike is seen in a different perspective. It is a dramatic gesture, affirming the proprietary interest of the worker in his job and resenting the attempt to keep him from the tools that he needs to live by. But what of those who have invested the fruit of their own work in the purchase of the plant? We admit the conflict of the proprietary claims. Eventually society will have to resolve this conflict by developing more cooperative methods of production, more equitable distribution of the product and more democratic control of the productive process. But in the meantime, labor cannot be blamed for applying in the assertion of its own rights the maxim that capital has been continually applying: "Possession is nine points of the law."

A Challenge To The "Good-Will" Movement

THE Nazis recently published a new "version" of the Gospel of St. John, prepared primarily by Heinz Weidemann, the Evangelical bishop of Bremen who is one of the leaders of the "German Christian" movement. The revisions are, of course, in accord with the entire anti-Semitic outlook of present day Nazism: Jesus is made out to be a non-Jew, Pontius Pilate is painted white as a lily (almost a saint), and the entire Jewish people is described as a murderous horde of barbarians. It is a sad commentary upon our state of mind when we say that all this was to be expected; such is our power of adaptation to calumny.

What we did not expect, however, was the reaction of American Protestantism to the new Gospel of John. Our contemporary, the *Christian Century,* recently published a lengthy editorial entitled "The Nazis Discover John" which we believe to be highly significant. The writer points out that the Nazis had little to revise in this book of the New Testament, for in its original form it is "a profoundly anti-Semitic book." He goes on to indicate that, in general, "Christians have been nurtured from the beginning on a sacred literature adapted to producing anti-Semitic attitudes." After describing how, in the course of the first century after the death of Jesus, the Church gradually vindicated Pontius and paganized Jesus, the writer concludes that "the classic and normative documents of Christianity have in some measure aided and abetted" the perpetration of "unspeakable crimes . . . against the Jew." He is aghast at the thought that "during

the present quarter, for example, Protestant Sunday School pupils throughout the world are studying the Fourth Gospel. Is that study helping to make Jew-haters of our children?"

The question is unanswered; but the reader infers that the answer is undoubtedly "yes," for the writer proceeds to suggest a method of teaching the Gospels without incurring such lamentable consequences. His suggestion is that teachers learn to approach the New Testament from the historical point of view. "The Gospels are not to be looked at, but to be looked through, and one cannot do this adequately until one is ready and able to allow accurately for the defects of the medium." In other words, if the student can be taught to read the Gospels in the context of their historical setting, he will come to appreciate the basic teachings of Jesus, while discounting the Jew-hatred contained in the text; the student will understand that at that particular time, and under those particular circumstances, allegiance to the ethical principles enunciated by Jesus necessarily involved antagonism to the Jew, an antagonism which today is not necessarily so involved.

It is heartening indeed to find in a journal, which represents so vast a body of American Protestants, such an unequivocal statement regarding the affinity of anti-Semitism to basic Christian teaching. Yet we do not feel altogether assured that the method suggested by the editorial writer is an adequate one. It is all very well to set the Gospels against the background of historic events; but we have learned from bitter experience that the version of those events itself is all too frequently colored by the prejudices and hatreds of the scholars who reconstruct those events for us. The whole development of Biblical criticism, to which, incidentally German scholars contributed most, only served the anti-Semites to reenforce their anti-Semitism.

We should like to suggest, rather, if we may, a more positive and emphatic procedure. Let the Protestants of America subscribe to some such public pronouncement as the following: "The Gospels were conceived and written on the basis of the proposition that the new Christian Church replaced the Jewish people as the Chosen of God. Salvation thenceforth could be achieved only through belief in Jesus. The Jews were forever thereafter to be regarded as the damned and rejected of God. We repudiate such doctrine. We reaffirm our allegiance to those teachings of Jesus which exhort us to love one another in peace and justice; that love must be extended to *all* the children of God."

Are our Christian neighbors prepared to say "yea" to such a declaration? If so, we shall then know that the protestations of friendship and cooperation are really meaningful. The religious forces of the United States are now preparing to observe Brotherhood Day throughout the land. The leaders of the "Good-will" movements are sanguine about the effects of their efforts. We maintain that all their work will amount to no more than sheer verbiage unless and until the Churches are prepared to carry out to their logical ends the implications contained in the *Christian Century* editorial, namely, to cease making Jew-haters of their children by openly and unmistakably declaring that they no longer subscribe to the belief that the Jews are the "rejected of God."

The Situation of The Jews in Poland*

By JACOB LESTCHINSKY

Translated from the Yiddish by Samuel Dinin

I

THERE are at present 3,150,000 Jews in Poland, who constitute 9.3 per cent of the entire population. Before the war, the Jews in Poland (within the present boundaries) constituted 12 per cent of the population; in 1921—10.5 per cent; in 1931—9.5 per cent; in 1936—9.3 per cent. There are two reasons for the decreasing percentage of Jews in Poland. First, the natural increase has become smaller; and secondly, Jews have emigrated in larger numbers than have non-Jews. In the past 15 years, a total of 1,100,000 have emigrated from Poland; of these, over 300,000 or almost 30 per cent, were Jews. The rate of Jewish emigration has thus been three times as large as the percentage of Jews in the population.

Although the Jewish population has decreased in proportion to the rest of the population, there has been, of course, an absolute increase in numbers. In 1921, there were 2,845,000 Jews in Poland; in 1936—3,150,000, an increase in 15 years of 300,000. This in itself is of tremendous significance. Despite the terrible poverty of Polish Jewry, despite the pogroms, there has been an absolute growth in the number of Jews. It can readily be understood that this is not due to the fact that the Jews do not want to emigrate; but simply because they have no place whither to escape. Without underestimating this growth of the Jewish population, it is nevertheless important to remember that the non-Jewish population has in the same 15 years (from 1921-1936) increased by SIX million. Up to 1931, at least 100,000 Poles emigrated from Poland every year; for the last five years, non-Jewish emigration from Poland has stopped altogether. In fact, the number of Poles returning to their homeland from France and Belgium more than offsets the number lost by emigration. The Jews, driven and oppressed on all sides, handicapped in every conceivable way—physically, politically, economically, morally, manage, nevertheless, to crowd into the most outlandish places, and from 20-25 thousand, barely half of the natural increase, leave Poland annually. The non-Jewish population, even though it too suffers from horrible poverty, exerts no such effort or energy in searching out already congested places to which to go. It remains at home — in poverty and need, in filth and mire. This accretion of six million in 15 years and the fact that the emigration of Polish and Ukrainian masses has ceased are the chief factors which affect the condition of the Jewish masses, forcing them to flee to the ends of the earth, and driving them as though with iron whips, to seek ever more intensively and more hastily a new place under the sun.

These iron whips assume variegated forms: pogroms, expulsion from trade and the handicrafts, and exclusion from all Government employment. The effects of these instruments of persecution are visible in the catastrophic decline in the percentage of Jews in the urban populations.

Throughout the nineteenth century, large Jewish masses were concentrated in the cities of what today is Poland. In those cities they were continually on the increase in proportion to the rest of the population. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Jews constituted 10-15 per cent of the urban population, but by the end of the century, they numbered

*From a brochure entitled *The Economic Catastrophe of The Jews in Germany and Poland,* issued by the World Jewish Congress.

30-35 per cent, and in many suburban towns they had a majority. This growth of the urban Jewish population not only made possible greater physical security for the Jewish masses, a firmer basis for the economic positions they had won, a broader consumers' public of Jewish masses for Jewish products, but also laid the foundation for those political and national aspirations and struggles which transformed an agglomeration of individuals into a people.

The post-war development changed the situation radically. An examination of the following table showing the percentage of Jews in a few of the larger cities, will indicate how catastrophic this development has been:

Name of City	% of Jews in 1897 or 1900*	% Jews in 1931
Brzesc	75.4	44.3
Luzc	72.1	48.9
Rowno	69.4	56.0
Wlodzimierz	66.6	43.4
Bialystok	66.4	43.0
Grodno	59.9	42.6
Kowel	58.9	46.4
Boryslaw	58.7	47.4
Stanislaw	51.2	41.4
Kutno	51.1	27.5
Kolomyja	50.8	42.4
Rzeszow	48.3	41.7
Tarnopol	46.5	39.3
Wilno	45.4	28.2
Drohobycz	44.7	40.1
Suwalki	41.0	26.6
Przemysl	35.3	34.0
Warsaw	33.9	30.1
Lodz	31.8	33.5
Lwow	29.0	31.9
Krakow	24.1	25.8

II

At the end of the 19th century the Jews had a majority in 11 out of the 21 cities, and in 16 cities they constituted more than 40 per cent of the population, i.e., a *relative* majority. In 1931, the Jews had a majority in only *one* city; in 12 cities they constituted more than 40 per cent of the population, or a relative majority. But from 1931 to 1936, the percentage of Jews declined further, and more rapidly. There is no doubt, that in a few of the 12 cities referred to, the Poles already have a relative majority.

In only 3 of the 21 cities (Lodz, Lwow and Krakow) has there been a slight increase in the number of Jews. But taking into consideration the data for 1921 we see that even in two of these cities, the *percentage* of Jews has fallen, even though slightly. In 1921 the Jews of Lodz constituted 34.5 per cent of the population, but in 1931 only 33.5. Similarly the Jews in Lwow constituted 35.0 per cent of the population in 1921 and 31.9 in 1931.

It is true that in many of the cities the percentage of non-Jews was increased in an artificial way, by amalgamating these with neighboring villages and farms. But whatever the cause, the result was equally fatal for the Jews. The non-Jewish suburban population, absorbed by the cities, assimilated the urban culture, increased the ranks of competitors in trade and labor and multiplied the number of candidates for urban jobs.

This sudden increase of the non-Jewish urban population, particularly of the Poles, who are the dominant majority in the Government, is an *organic* and *organized* phenomenon.

Overpopulation in the village drives people to the cities. Not finding any work in industry, these newcomers go into business and handicrafts, in which two-thirds of the Jewish population are employed. We shall see later how this struggle for a place in the market, for a grocery store, for the buying of rags and remnants in the villages, for the selling of needles and thread from house to house,—in short, the struggle for petty trade has taken on *physical aspects.* The *economic* pogrom in Poland today is so bound up with the *physical,* that it is almost difficult to distinguish one from the other. A Govern-

*For those cities which were in Russia at the same time, the figures are for 1897; for those in Austria—1900.

ment which tolerates the economic pogrom, must of necessity permit, up to a certain point, the physical pogrom, even if that Government is in principle opposed to physical methods of struggle. In this instance the *Government* itself is the main organizer of the economic pogrom, because it is the largest entrepreneur and employer of labor. The State takes the greatest share of the people's income and exercises chief control over credits. Twenty-five per cent of the national income of the land comes from Government undertakings. Two-thirds of the credit operations are in the hands of the Government. More than 80 per cent of the people's savings are in the Government banks.

A million people are employed in Government and State agencies and enterprises as officers, managers and workers. Together with the other members of the families of these men, they constitute from 2½ to 3 million souls. There are as many as 2,000 Government enterprises, including not only the chemical and other industries which have a direct bearing on the defense of the country, but also the saw-mills, printing, tobacco, match, salt, whiskey, lumber, forestry and countless other industries. There is almost no branch of industry in which the Government has not a hand in one form or another. By means of monopolies, and syndicates with Government majorities, the Government influences every aspect of the economic life of Poland. Through its licensing of exports and imports, through the handicraft guilds, and by the regulation of trade, the Government is able to wield further influence and to direct economic activity in whatever direction it desires. As a result of its ability to give or to withhold currency, to permit this or that export or import, the State plays a big role, often a determining role in all of these undertakings.

The Government positions are monopolized by the national majority. Every device is used to reduce greatly the percentage of Jews in the liberal professions. The percentage of Jewish students in the Polish universities decreased from 24.6 in 1922 to 14.8 in 1936, a total decline of 1000 students, even though there were no legal restrictions introduced. The number of non-Jewish students increased 16 per cent during the same period, from 1922-1936. Even the credit operations and taxation are used for the benefit of the national majority, which means in actuality the oppression of the national minorities. Thus are the cities being nationalized, a fact which the previous table so impressively reveals.

But these are only the first and only incidental effects of the *organic* process which is driving the non-Jewish population into trade and handicraft and of the Government's policy of eliminating the Jews from business, Government offices and liberal professions. The second phase of this development will be more intensive and more widespread. After overcoming the first obstacles to engaging in business, namely, lack of experience and want of capital, the majority will find it easier to penetrate into what are for them new branches of industry. This means that the expulsion of Jews from their old occupations will be so drastic that it will change radically the future of Polish Jewry.

III

As to the economic conditions of the Jewish masses in Poland, I do not believe that citing dry facts or charting past or future processes is sufficient. In order really to evaluate the significance of these processes, their power and endurance, one must examine their sources, the environment and the atmosphere in which they arise. I deem it therefore necessary to acquaint the reader with the economic background, with the attitudes, and with the surrounding atmosphere, which accompany this drive of the non-Jewish population to trade and handiwork.

Poland is an agricultural country. Of every 100 economically active persons in 1921, 72.3 per cent were engaged in agriculture. No significant changes have taken place since then. This is evident from the fact that the urban population numbered 25 per cent in 1921 and 27 per cent in 1931. About 24 million people make their living off the land—about two-thirds of the whole population. Upon the fate of these two-thirds, the whole land is dependent. Let us therefore see how the Polish peasantry live. Of the 3¼ million peasant households, 1,700,000 possess less than 2 hectares of land. All these small households own together only one million hectares, or 3½ per cent of all the land cultivated. Each household has thus an average of *less than one hectare of land.** The big landowners, on the other hand, who possess more than 500 hectares each, number only 6,000 and constitute but 0.2 per cent of all households. Together they possess 8 million hectares—more than 25 per cent of all cultivated land. Every such landowner thus has an average of 1300 hectares of land.

More than a third of the peasants, therefore, own so little land that it is useless to talk of their making a living out of it. These peasants are the first candidates for work in the cities. They are also employed by the big landowners. These same poor peasants, who eat a piece of sugar once a year at a big festival, who split their matches in three, who go to sleep early because they have no oil for their lamps, and who go about barefoot and in rags, are the few million Poles characterized by the economic scientists as "superfluous," and who should be made to emigrate to the cities, if and when a large industry is developed for them. The savants also speak of the emigration of elements among the poorest of the Polish masses to other countries.

It is important to emphasize at this point that not only the poorest one-third of the Polish peasants are ready to flood the cities; that there are enough candidates for city jobs among the second third as well. There are more than a million peasant households which have from 2 to 5 hectares of land. Because of the primitive cultivation of the soil, because of the low prices for agricultural products, and because of the poverty in cattle and in mechanical tools, this second third too lives in great need. This group, furthermore, consumes few industrial products and produces ever new candidates for new jobs. The children of these peasant masses are the ones who crowd the petty trades in the villages and towns, who crowd into the handicrafts and into the "housework" crafts. The first group is so poor that they do not have the necessary capital to purchase village stores or small town market stands. The second group is somewhat richer and constitutes the front with which the impoverished Jewish small-towner comes into conflict.

IV

Regarding the condition of the workers, it will suffice to quote a few figures concerning their wages.* Almost a quarter of all the workers get less than two dollars a week; more than half earn less than four dollars a week; only 5 per cent of all the workers receive more than $10 a week. This is true only when all industries are lumped together. If one considers individual industries, one gets a much bleaker, but a far more realistic picture of the Jewish situation.

The following table shows what percentage of the workers in different industries earn less than ten zlotys a week: **

Among the	miners	5.4%
" "	coal-workers	4.3%
" "	workers in middle and large industries	11.8%
" "	workers in small industries	21.4%
" "	government workers	37.9%
" "	home industry workers	44.7%

*See *Rocznik Statstyki* on the year 1929, p. 38 and *Maly Rocznik Statystyczny* for the year 1935, p. 47.

*See *Maly Rocznik Statystyczny* for the year 1935, p. 164.
**Ibid.

As 80 per cent of the Jewish workers are occupied in handwork and "home-industry," it is evident that more than a third of the Jewish workers earn less than two dollars (10 zlotys), a week — while among miners there are 6 times fewer workers earning so little, and among miners 8 times fewer workers, and it is just in these latter occupations in which there are no Jews. Of those earning more than 60 zlotys or 10 dollars a week are to be found: among miners, 23.5 per cent; among those working at handicrafts, 2.2 per cent; among those working in home industry, 1.0 per cent.

From these data it can readily be imagined how the unemployed live. And again it is the Jews who suffer most. Since 80 per cent of the Jews are occupied in handicrafts and "home-industry," they have no security in case of unemployment, and get no support from the Government. I will show later that the Jewish unemployed are boycotted by the Governmental and communal enterprises, which are established by a work-fund for unemployed, by means of a special tax on trade and industry. That the Jews are sinned against, and grievously, in the charities supported by the Government and by the city magistracies is a fact to which even Jews have become accustomed, and against which they raise little protest.

There is no value in quoting the official data concerning the unemployed (almost 400,000), for they are so remote from the truth, that no one in Poland takes them seriously. Aside from this, both in the Jewish and non-Jewish world, the problem of those without vocation, of those who have never had a chance to work, is much more critical than the problem of the unemployed of those who have lost their jobs. There are 7 million young people in Poland from the ages of 17-25 who have work neither in agriculture nor in industry and trade: they are "superfluous"—this is the tragedy of the youngest, the most active, the most capable, and the most fruitful age group. Among these millions of "superfluous" are children of all classes and strata—laborers, unemployed, nobility, professors, doctors, merchants, factory workers, and others. There are about 650,000 young Jews among these seven million. There are hundreds and thousands among the more than six million non-Jewish "superfluous" persons who at least have hopes of some day finding a place for themselves in life by taking the place of an official, a teacher, a professional, a bank director, a manager or worker in a Government factory, of a conductor or laborer on the railroad, of a lamp-lighter or street-cleaner and of countless others—but the Jewish youth is dependent solely and exclusively upon private economy, which is absolutely filled to overflowing in all branches, and is so swiftly gliding out of Jewish hands that not a single Jewish parent — no matter how rich or firmly established his business—believes his child will ever inherit his position or business.

V

From the data presented we can see more clearly the economic environment in which Polish Jewry must carry on its struggle for existence. I should like, however, to convey the *atmosphere* in which this struggle is taking place. A few somewhat lengthy citations from the Polish press will best serve this purpose.

In the "Ilustrowany Kwijer Codzienny" of June 14, 1936 there is a description of the region of Radom, where a number of pogroms took place last winter. This correspondent writes: "In the course of the first few months of this year there have been established in the western part of the Radomir district about 160 units of peasant trade, 50 of these in Przytyk alone which have bought trade-patents. About 2500 such units have been set up by non-Jews during the past year in the districts of Radom, Opoczno, Kaniec, Koznice and Opatow. It is a fact that in these places, the peasants have gained complete control over the food-trade in

the villages. Likewise the trade in agricultural products has been taken over by the peasants. The result is that almost all the Jewish mills have been closed, while the Polish mills work without a stop. Up to a short time ago the Jews had a monopoly of the cattle trade, but in the course of one year the peasants have gained complete control of this trade, getting the trade from the newly-established Christian meat-markets: in Radom, 9; in Bialobyzeg, 2; in Staryczew, 1; in Zwollin, 1; in Przytyk, 1; in Odsziwal, 1; in Jedlinsk, 1; and in other hamlets. In the region of Radom I have learned that 3 young peasants have sold their land, and with a capital of 200 gulden have taken to cattle-trade. One of them boasted that he earned a clear profit of 300 zlotys during the past week alone."

The writer relates further that in these districts they have stopped leasing orchards to Jews as was the custom for many years; that many Gentile men and women, formerly unemployed, travel around from village to village selling clothing, that the peasants have taken over entirely the trade in milk and eggs, and that a few peasant pioneers have already appeared dealing in cast-off clothing. He continues:

"This whole movement is still in its formative period, but there already have been established in these provinces tens of large establishments in men's furnishings and textiles, and a few large iron warehouses—and in one district—a considerable number of warehouses for combustibles." There has also been opened in Radom, the first Polish clothing business, and the first laundry. . . . A Polish warehouse for lumber and building material, an iron-foundry and two sugar factories have also been opened recently in Radom. Market stands are the first to go. The Jews in Przytyk once had fifty stands on Fair days. Now the Jews have but 10; the other 40 have been taken over by Gentiles. A similar situation exists in the labor field. In one Radom district hundreds of Polish shoemakers have been given work. Lately there have been no unemployed among the Polish tailors. There is a great demand for Polish cap-makers, and tailors. The Polish stores have recently doubled their income."

The correspondent relates the following: For the last 16 weeks only one peasant has brought wheat to sell to a Jewish merchant. But while he was away doing business with a Jew, the following words were dug out in large letters in his own garden: "Swoi do swiego," which means: "Buy from your own kind."

I know I shall be forgiven for quoting so long a citation. We are witnessing the birthpangs of the petit and middle Polish bourgeoisie; we can hear the voices of its first representatives; we can feel on our shoulders the onslaught of this new Polish middle class, attacking us with sticks and knives, with iron bars and stench-bombs.

From the correspondence printed by the aforementioned paper, which is not anti-Semitic and on which even Jews work, we can see the impact of these new candidates for city jobs, we can see the march on the Jewish market, the attack on the Jewish market stands, on the Jewish stores, on the Jewish workshops. At first the Poles occupy the weakest positions: the market stands, the building trades; the village-store; the small town grocery stores. They extend their program as their appetite grows; as opportunities increase they enter into the textile business, the men's furnishing business, the iron business, the lumber trade, the wholesale business. After the foundations are laid for the Polish petty trade, the second story is built, the "middle trade." And in time the third story will inevitably rise, and with it control of the large-scale trade.

And with it all we must not forget that we are living no longer in an age of large and wide perspectives, with possibilities of expansion, with hopes of exporting goods to foreign countries; we are living no longer in an era of capitalism in its early stages of growth. We are liv-

ing no longer in an atomized society, in which the economic individual (the *homo economicus*) is the point of departure for the group, in a society of liberal ideas and *automatic* development. The 19th century with its expansion tendencies lies dead before us—and we are entering an age of contraction in which the weaker, the outsider is shunted off or expelled.

(To be concluded)

Jewish Failure of Nerve

By Irving Levitas

I

OF the various trends of thought in American Jewish life today, none is more deserving of commentary than the recently developed one of neo-mysticism. The general bias of this approach is one of deprecating reason as an instrument in interpreting the world and the Jews' place in it. A strange conglomeration of ideas greets us in this sphere of ideological reaction, ranging from a pseudo-Hasidism to mystical conceptions of Jewish differences. The reason, or intellect—for in this instance the terms are controvertible—is considered a useless instrument for the ultimate solution of problems because this is conceived to be an irrational world or, as held by another school of thought, reason can lead men to irrational actions.

It is to be expected that the proponents of this idea should find it particularly amiss that some of the stellar representatives of Jewish life should be those men who attempted to apply reason to Jewish problems. They have therefore deemed it necessary to analyze the results of these attempts and, in the main, have found them but temporary adjustments and ultimately futile. Looking for a "permanent" substratum upon which they could seek refuge, they have postulated the above-mentioned concepts, which by their very nature defy rational approach in terms of intelligibility through explanation.

It is my purpose here to analyze this trend of thought in an effort to point out its metaphysical fallacy in terms of epistemology, and its vicious results in terms of ultimate ends. That in many respects we are, in general, going through a period of philosophic reaction of which the Jewish aspect is but a reflection, can be seen through even a cursory examination of contemporary thought. Without assuming the validity of Spengler's thesis, one can readily apply to this era of philosophy that phrase which Gilbert Murray gave to the post-Aristotelian schools of thought in the Alexandrian period, that of "failure of nerve"; failure to apply reason, with its tentative results, to the solution of problems. There was a general trend then to accept the Oriental mysteries and the pseudo-philosophies of itinerant preachers. The long era of thought which had begun with the Eleatics and Ionians through Plato and Aristotle, and maintained temporary refuge in Stoicism, ended in the mystical speculations of the Mysteries of Orpheus and Dionysius. The acceptance of a personal Messiah or avenger of human ills was deemed necessary for social adjustment, rather than the application of reason to these problems. The situation today, in which instance we can substitute the idea of "Der Fuehrer" or "Il Duce" as substantially playing the same role in respect to political problems, is too apparent to necessitate commentary.

However, even in Apocalyptic thought, which was the Jewish reflection of the thought of this period, we did not find this wholesale repudiation of reason. Why is it that in our day, where the situation can be identified as being reasonably simi-

lar, has there been such a ready acceptance of irrationalism? What has prompted Jewish thought in this direction?

II

Perhaps the best way to discuss this problem intelligibly is to examine the literature of the proponents of these irrationalisms. A book which illustrates this tendency is S. Melamed's "Spinoza and Buddha." [1]

That Spinoza is in many respects the foremost proponent of an intelligible world is apparent even from the attack made upon him by his virulent opponents. His assumption of the "More Geometricum," which Professor Wolfson has identified with the "More Rabbinicum," makes him a seemingly easy mark for those who oppose rational philosophy.

The word "philosophy" in this respect is so variously used in the mouths of different speakers and applied to such widely different things that it seems almost wrong for a writer to use it without giving it an exact definition. The intelligent student of philosophy will not be inclined to restrict its application within very narrow limits, and yet he is compelled to recognize that, unless its significance be in some way limited, the word ceases to have reason for its existence. Those who declare that all human actions have their roots in selfishness rob the word "selfishness" of its damnatory content, for they so extend its use that it ceases to mark a distinction and suggests a contrast.

We cannot therefore call all thought and feeling philosophical without doing violence to an accepted term, which has a meaning, although an indefinite and fluctuating one. We can therefore assume that that system is philosophical which renders the world intelligible and possible of rational interpretation. I say "rational interpretation" advisedly, for any system of thought that cannot justify itself through explanation in verbal terminology, without resorting to an impenetrable "unity" or indefinable quality, is not deserving of the word that meant, and still means, "love of wisdom."

When we examine the book at hand, we find that Dr. Melamed has neglected to understand that a man is the product of the past and not of his future. A philosopher may be influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries, but he can hardly be influenced by generations yet to come. Hence it is grossly unjust to interpret the worth of a man's activities by the utilization of his thoughts in hands other than his own. It is, if I may wax Biblical, contrary to all literary and ethical canons to rest the sins of the children upon the fathers in such an unnatural fashion. No matter what sort of grapes the children eat, it is a violation of propriety for the fathers' teeth to be set on edge.[2]

Concomitant with this charge of having sponsored peculiar developments of later theoretical structures is that of antecedent parallelism. The burden of this charge is that the individual in question has developed (either spontaneously or intentionally) a particular line of thought that has its counterpart in some other system of philosophic thought. This peculiar fallacy is really a phase of the diffusionist hypothesis which has been repudiated in sociological groups. The specific error in this mode of interpretation is that it neglects the unique character of the promulgator of that doctrine, his environmental conditions and intellectual background—essential elements in any judgment of creative work.

The logical conclusion of such an hypothesis (that of parallelism) is the denial of personality in history, a procedure which is extremely dangerous. Looking at history as an attempt to understand the nature of the world and man's place in it, are we justified in saying that if Plato, Kant or Hegel had not lived, the history of philosophy would have been

[1] University of Chicago Press, 1933.

[2] Viz. remarks on Lenin, Bismarck and Nietzsche in the chapter on *Spinoza and Modern Culture.*

substantially the same? He would be a rash man who would assert it, yet Dr. Melamed makes such comments on Isaiah and Jeremiah.[3]

Another point that the proponents of these mystical doctrines neglect to observe is an extremely pertinent comment by Hobbes to the effect that "Words are the coins of wise men; the wealth of fools." To lapse into verbal pyrotechnics, under the medieval nominalistic fallacy that words are the exact counterpart of reality, is not to solve problems; it simply confuses the issue.[4] Perhaps in this era of material splendor and magnificence it is necessary to manifest signs of plutocracy, but I doubt its legitimacy in the realm of verbal activity.

The desire to enclose a system in a concise statement, which is typical of this whole school, or create imaginary antitheses through adroit juxtaposition—these are methods of a tyro and befit temporary discussion rather than permanent philosophical expression. There is no single intellectual creation—be it "Mona Lisa," "Faust," or Buddhism which presents a unifying concrete aspect and can be so defined without reservation. To assert that "Buddhism negates life, while Judaism affirms it" [5] is to hold the thesis that Buddhism is a system that is permanent in the sense that it can withstand the vicissitudes of time as expressed in the changing conceptions of life and its meaning.[6]

This error also exhibits itself in the selection of specific sections of a treatise with an end in view of refuting it—to take the text out of the context and make it a pretext, so to speak. To take a sentence out of Spinoza's "Ethics," "The body cannot determine the mind to thought, nor can the mind determine the body to motion—" and cast ridicule on it for its apparent misconstruction of psychology without first adding Spinoza's own scholium to that proposition, that "this proposition can be better understood (if it is remembered) that the mind and the body are one and the same thing" [7] is more than an error; it is unjust. Stated in the manner of Spinoza's presentation, the idea becomes not only plausible, but happens to be the standpoint of modern psychology on the mind-body problem. [8]

Here, then, we find in an embryonic stage the various fallacies that are symptomatic of the Jewish failure of nerve in its negative phase.

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[3] Page 9, *ibid.*

[4] Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning,* N. Y., 1929.

[5] Melamed, *op. cit.,* page 10.

[6] Viz. Ramanujz, *Theory of the Finite Self,* Calcutta, 1903.

[7] Spinoza, *Ethics, III,* 2.

[8] C. Fox, *The Mind and Its Body,* N. Y., 1933.

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Realities of Jewish Life

Corliss Lamont, in *The Marxist Quarterly* for January-March, 1937 (160 ff.) pleads with radicals to recognize in progressive religion a friend and ally, and not to confuse it with what posed as religion in Russia under the Czars. "Probably no body of professionals in the U. S. has amongst it proportionately more radicals than the clergy."

* * * *

In a stage setting of semi-darkness surrounded by the spirit of all that is like unto the sanctum of heaven, Temple Beth Israel services returned from a palace of service reading to a sanctum of religious teachings.

Rabbi Robert I. Kahn of Texas inaugurated a unique idea of Sabbath worship when in this setting of semi-darkness he explained that the purpose of setting this stage was to make the surroundings more spiritual and God-like. Its purpose is to take away those things that tend to detract rather than attract.

As an innovation it was a success and to most minds it was awe inspiring. It left nothing to be desired in the worship of the God of Israel.

In this atmosphere of contentment, one could only be inspired and with this thought, one was brought closer to his Maker. The House of the Lord was surely a House of Worship and with all things material set aside only those things temporal were left, making worship all the more inspiring and spiritual.

Coming into the Temple from the outside world of hurry and bustle into semi-darkness, one at once became transfixed into a new being, which after all is the purpose of the Sabbath . . . a new beginning.

* * * *

At the Second Soviet Congress of the Jewish Autonomous Territory, recently held in the city of Biro-Bidjan, the following facts and figures, reflecting the growth of the cultural institutions in the Autonomous Territory were presented:

There are at present 72 grammar schools, 32 junior high schools, 9 high schools. The total number of pupils in these 113 schools is 15,195.

There are also 53 Kindergartens, which take care of 228 children, and a nursery that serves 50 children.

Also there are four technicums: pedagogical, metallurgical, agricultural and medical. 217 students attend the pedagogical institute, while 180 fill the classes of the metallurgical institute. More than 600 instructors are teaching in the above educational institutions.

In order to liquidate the illiteracy among the backward of the adult population there are at present functioning 70 schools for those who are totally illiterate, 135 schools for the less illiterate and 12 schools of a higher type for adults. Almost all of them are evening schools. There is also one evening University for cultural training for adults, where those who are occupied during the day, attend various classes in the evening hours.

* * * *

There are printing plants in Palestine having an output in 1935 of £190,000 (about $950,000) value and spending £140,000 on wages and materials. Bookbinding establishments produced a value of £15,000. With sixty Jewish publications appearing in Palestine, of which one or two figure among the biggest papers in the Near East, the annual value of their production is estimated as at least £200,000.

Palestine Jewry is believed to spend nearly £500,000 a year on reading matter.

* * * *

Interesting figures have been published in *The Palestine Post* by Dr. Erwin Bromberger of Jerusalem as to the augmented book production of the Palestine Jewish community during the past year. Forming only 29 percent of the general population, Palestine Jewry was responsible for 94 percent of the books published in 1935.

The absolute figures do not appear very imposing to readers accustomed to enormous fall book lists in America. Just one publishing house is responsible in a season for the total issued in Eretz Israel in a year.

Of 460 books put out last year, 398 were in Hebrew and only 22 in Arabic. The rest were in English. Hebrew books included 159 fiction, 105 textbooks, 34 religious works, 10 dictionaries, 22 histories and geographies and six works on philosophy. Moreover, there were 13 books in German and 12 in Yiddish.

Exports decreased during the year, but expenditure on imported books rose to £63,912 (approximately $320,000) as compared with £25,000 in 1933 and £37,000 in 1934—an increase of 260 percent!

* * * *

General Franco, reports the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, has ordered registration within forty-eight hours of all Jews in territory under his control. Jews will be considered a suspicious element and will not be allowed to hold public positions under the rebel regime.

* * * *

The Arabic translation of Hitler's autobiography, "Mein Kampf," is now a best seller in Palestine, Iraq, Syria and other Arabic lands, according to reports in the Nazi press. Sale of the German edition was prohibited in Palestine but the recent Arab translation is enjoying a wide popularity.

* * * *

The teaching of the Hebrew language was ordered discontinued in Bavarian classical high schools. The language was also forbidden as an elective course.